

Mink



Overview:

The mink was probably common in Ohio before settlement and today it occurs in every county in Ohio. Because of its preference for small streams cluttered with vegetation or wooded banks, the highest population densities occur in eastern and southeastern Ohio. The mink is prized by the trapper both for its pelt and for the great skill required to capture it. To the wildlife enthusiast, the sight of this elusive furbearer is a thrilling surprise that must be experienced quickly, before the dynamic creature can scurry away to a place of concealment.

This sleek furbearer is weasel-like or ferret-like in appearance possessing a long, narrow body, but is considerably larger with a bushier tail. It has small, rounded ears, beady eyes, short legs, and sharp claws. The mink's fur is usually a rich chocolate brown, but can look almost black. A white chest or chin patch with spots scattered on the underparts of the body is also characteristic. The coat is lustrous, durable and one of the most beautiful in the world.

Adults weigh 1.25-3 pounds and are 12-17 inches long. Mink can live to be 5 years old, but usually live 3-4 years.

The mink is a solitary, restless creature which associates willingly with other mink only during the mating season which is January through March. The female, which is able to breed at one year of age, usually makes a den in a burrow along the bank of a stream or lake or under a stump or log. A muskrat hole in a stream bank or under a stump with exposed roots is an ideal location. The gestation period is variable due to delayed implantation of embryos into the uterus and can last 39-76 days; 42 days on average. The young are born with eyes closed and those eyes will open at five weeks of age. The female assumes all responsibility for rearing the young, which are considered full grown at five months.

The mink is almost invariably found near water - both running waters of streams and rivers and the standing waters of marshes and lakes. Minks are especially drawn to areas that are wooded or brushy. Although territorial by nature, the male often wanders far afield. When males meet, a violent fight is likely to ensue and may leave one or more mink dead. An angry mink can screech, hiss, snarl, and bark. A contented mink may purr or churr. Like its distant relative the skunk, the mink has anal scent glands which can excrete a fluid that smells somewhat like diluted skunk musk. They typically eat small mammals, preferably muskrats, as well as birds, frogs, eggs, fish and crayfish.